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## **First-ever public purchasing conference helps procurement professionals identify best practices**

LIVONIA – Purchasing professionals and vendors from across Michigan shared information and collaborated to define industry best practices at the first-ever State of Michigan Conference for Public Purchasing Professionals. The event, which was held June 25 at Schoolcraft College, brought 225 participants together to discuss the challenges they face and the trends affecting public purchasing.

“This landmark conference assembled the state’s legal and purchasing experts to discuss best practices,” said Lisa Webb Sharpe, director of the Michigan Department of Management and Budget (DMB). “The results of today’s event will enhance our state’s public purchasing practices.”

Conference presenters included Linda Parker, director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights; Frank Monticello, bureau chief in the Office of the Attorney General; Judith Smith, procurement director for the University of Michigan; Michelle Crockett, principal attorney with Miller Canfield Paddock and Stone; Ken Theis, director of the Michigan Department of Information Technology; and James Epolito, president and chief executive officer of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Dan Krichbaum, chief operating officer for Governor Jennifer M. Granholm’s office, offered insight on supplier diversity and inclusion.

Conference presenters also discussed the impact of Proposal 2, which amended Michigan’s Constitution to prohibit programs that consider race or gender in areas such as public contracting. Panelists agreed that the amendment did not prohibit public groups from conducting outreach efforts to underrepresented groups, if those efforts supplemented programs aimed at the general public.

“I really enjoyed the ‘Impact of Proposal 2’ plenary session,” said Teresa Johnson, procurement coordinator for the City of Kalamazoo. “It clearly articulated that affirmative action was not abolished, and it is a process change to ensure inclusion.”

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“As a public purchasing professional, this conference was invaluable in identifying best practices and networking with peers and prospective vendors,” said Kenneth Doherty, associate director of purchasing at Wayne State University. “I would encourage more public professionals and vendors to attend the conference next year.”

“The workshops were outstanding and beneficial in understanding the local, county, education, state and federal procurement process for information technology, human services and construction,” said Victor Naidu, president of Ramsoft Systems Inc. of Southfield and president of Indus Entrepreneurial Organization and the National Association of Computer Consulting Businesses. “As a vendor, this conference was a very good investment of time and money.”

Organizers plan to hold the State of Michigan Conference for Public Purchasing Professionals annually. The 2009 event will be held at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids.

In addition to several State of Michigan departments, conference partners included the Michigan Association of Counties, Michigan Community College Association, Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Public Purchasing Officers Association, Michigan School Business Officials, and the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan. Event sponsors included the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Michigan Minority Business Development Council, the Greater Detroit Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers of Michigan and Schoolcraft College.

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